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ABSTRACT

This paper integrates several contemporary issues, all of which focus on the teaching of human developmental theories. These issues include postmodern thought, higher level thinking processes, introducting conceptual conflict and arousal, motivation, and integrating the writing process into the psychology curriculum. Each issue is briefly discussed and then a pedagogy designed to integrate it into a strategy for teaching a human development theories class is presented. The paper includes a study that used adaptation and application of relativistic and constructionist viewpoints to introduce conceptual conflict into the teaching of these classes. Subjects of the study were graduate education majors working on Master's and Specialist's degrees in Teacher Education, Home Economics, or School Psychology. The strategy employed by the student-subjects describes a solution using the medium of writing, not only the traditional answers to essay questions, but also the writing of the very questions themselves. The paper discusses an additional concern, which has been to challenge and foster high level cognitive processes by encouraging the integration, synthesis, evaluation, and analysis of knowledge. (One figure and one table are included, and 36 references are appended.) (MS)

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Abstract

This paper integrates several contemporary issues all of which focus on the teaching of human developmental theories. The most important issues include postmodern thought, higher level thinking processes, introducing conceptual conflict and arousal, motivation, and integrating the writing process into the psychology curriculum. Each issue is briefly discussed and then a pedagogy designed to integrate them into a strategy for teaching a human development theories class is presented. Adaptation and application of relativistic and constructionist viewpoints are used to introduce conceptual conflict into the teaching of these classes. An additional concern has been to challenge and foster higher level cognitive processes by encouraging the integration, synthesis, evaluation and analysis of knowledge. The strategy describes a solution using the medium of writing, not only the traditional answers to essay questions, but also the writing of the very questions themselves.

A paper presentation to the 8th Annual Lilly Conference on College teaching, November 4-6, 1988, Miami Univeristy, Oxford, Ohio.

A PEDAGOGICAL STRATEGY FOR TEACHING HUMAN DEVELOPMENT: DYADIC ESSAY CONFRONTATIONS THROUGH WRITING AND DISCUSSION.

This paper integrates several contemporary issues, all of which focus on the teaching of human developmental theories. The most important issues include 1) postmodern thought, 2) higher level thinking processes, 3) introducing conceptual conflict and arousal, 4) motivation and 5) integrating writing into the psychology curriculum. Each of these issues is briefly discussed and then integrated into a solution for teaching human development theories is presented.

Postmodernism. Foremost among these issues is the idea that we exist in a time which has been variously described as "postmodern," (Feyerabend, 1975), "poststructuralist," and "postpositivist" (Goodman, 1983). Increasingly these three terms are surfacing in a variety of disciplines ranging from the "fine arts," (Burnham, 1971), "philosophy" (Goodman, 1983), to "developmental psychology" (Bronfenbrenner et al., 1986; Gardner, 1985) and Educational Research (Phillips, 1983). Hare-Mustin and Mareck's (1988) article is one of the most recent and thorough discussions about "postmodernism". This might even be seen as a common sign of the times we live in, one which is uniquely interdisciplinary. One of the more interesting notions associated with these conceptions is the idea that there may be what Jerome Bruner (Bruner & Feldman, 1986) describes as "plural realities." I refer here to the age-old problem of determining whether there is an objective reality out there to be discovered (this is sometimes associated with the "realist" and "instrumentalists" schools of thought), or a subjective reality which we impose upon nature (a "constructionist, "relativist," and more recently a

"deconstructionist" school of thought). Pillips' (1983) discussion of "Postpositivistic Educational Thought," is one of the most thorough explanations of the many possible views which have surfaced to counter the original "logical positivists" view of the Wiener Kreis (Vienna Circle, circa 1920).

Ernst Cassirer (1955) has proposed that discourse creates (his term is "enacts") the world. Knowledge is not 'about' the world, but rather 'constitutive' of the world. Cassirer states:

> Every authentic function of the human spirit has this decisive characteristic in common with cognition: it does not merely copy but rather embodies an original, formative power. It does not express passively the mere fact that something is present but contains an independent energy of the human spirit through which the simple presence of the phonomenon assumes a definite 'meaning,' a particular ideational content. (p. 78)

He continues on to present a strong link between art, myth, language and cognition when he suggests that they are not "...different modes in which an independent reality manifests itself to the human spirit but roads by which the spirit proceeds toward its objectivization, ie., its self-revelation" (p. 78). More recently Eisner (1981) has expressed similar ideas when he attempts to differentiate the scientific from the artistic approach to qualitative research. Goodman (1983), strongly influenced by Cassirer, describes himself as a "constructionist" and "relativist" and expresses quite similar thinking. There is a strong similarity between what Cassirer and Goodman are describing and Perry's (1970) fifth stage of cognitive development, the "relativism or contextual thinking stage."

Developmental Theories. Certainly the many developmental theories presented in texts which are used in education courses "comparing" theories of human development, might be an example of

"plural realities": eg., Baldwin (1980), Lerner (1986), Miller (1983), Salkind (1985), Thomas (1985). An example of common usage of these texts is contained in Schadler's (1985) "If It's Tuesday, It Must Be Freud" review of Thomas' (1985) text. During a 15-week semester a dozen or so theories might be encountered in courses such as this. Each class period is devoted to a different theoretical view of human development ranging from Ainsworth's to Vygotskian interpretations of reality. With so many differing views - plural realities - how does one integrate and synthesize all of this knowledge?

Conceptual Conflict. A related issue is how does one contend with conceptual conflict and arousal (Berlyne, 1957) and use it to ones advantage. Johnson (1979) has stated that one of the keys to successful teaching is the promotion of controversy (p. 359). Flavel (1963) has stated:

> "In the course of his contacts (and especially, his conflicts and arguments) with other children, the child increasingly finds himself forced to reexamine his own percepts and concepts in the light of those others, and by so doing, gradually rids himself of cognitive egocentrism (p. 279)."

This may be true of adults as well. John Stuart Mill has stated that "Since the general or prevailing opinion on any subject is rarely or never the whole truth, it is only by the collision of adverse opinion that remainder of the truth has any chance of being supplied" (in Johnson, 1979, p. 361). Johnson et al. (1986) have continued to emphasize this postive role of cognitive conflict as motivation for learning.

Writing. One solution to problems of conceptual conflict and the integration of divergent viewpoints as found in the rich reserves of developmental theories is through writing. The present author has

recently been strongly influenced by several researchers interested in the writing process (Elbow, 1986 & 1987; Jones, 1987; Fulwiler & Young, 1982; Fulwiler & Jones, 1982). During a recent conference (the Seventh Annual Lilly Conference on College Teaching) Peter Elbow and Robert Jones made a forceful and convincing case for the integration of the writing process across various curriculae. Effective writing as a means of communication is an important skill which should be one of the successful outcomes of a college education. Teaching this skill effectively, it is argued, can only be accomplished when it is encouraged in other disciplines outside of the Departments of English who have traditionally been assigned this responsibility. In other words, even educational psychology classes should provide the opportunity to effectively write.

Elbow (1986) has also expressed a particularly post-modern view which is strongly related to Cassirer"s (1955), Bruner's (Bruner & Feldman, 1986) and Goodman's (1983) notions of plural realities and obviously associated with conceptual conflict:

> "A hunger for coherence; yet a hunger also to be true to the natural incoherence of experience. This dilemma has led me more often than I realized to work things out in terms of contraries: to gravitate toward oppositions and even to exaggerate differences - while also tending to notice how both sides of the opposition must somehow be right. My instinct has thus made me seek ways to avoid the limitations of the single point of view. And it has led me to a common sense view that surely there cannot be only 'one' right way to learn and teach (p. x).

Summary. As an educational psychologist who has always been concerned with the applications of psychological theory to teaching, and, having a concern for teaching human development theories within the context of a postmodern time, the present author has tried to adapt and apply these relativistic and constructionist viewpoints by

introducing conceptual conflict into the teaching of these classes. An additional concern has been to challenge and foster higher level cognitive processes (see Perry, 1970 as well as Bloom et al., 1971) by encouraging the integration, synthesis, evaluation and analysis of knowledge. The solution described below has been to use the medium of writing, not only the traditional answers to essay questions, but also the writing of the very questions themselves.

Method

Sample. The students who experienced the strategy described below were graduate education majors working on Master's and Specialist's degrees in Teacher Education, Home Economics, or School Psychology. Two sections of this class have used the writing techniques. One section during the Spring 1987 semester contained 17 students, another during the Spring 1988 semester contained 6 students. One of these sections was taught on our main campus (n=17) and the other on one of our branch campuses (n=6). For comparative purposes, two sections which did not use the dyadic confrontional approach are also presented. Thomas' (1985) book was a common and required text for this course which is entitled, "Human Development Theories." The 3 credit hour class is taught throughout a 15 week semester. Two additional writing projects, each a review of a recent quantitative developmental psychology research study taken from the journals, were required and constituted 60% of their grade for the class.

Procedure. The dyadic technique described below focused on nine short essay writing experiences which were assigned throughout the semester. At regularly scheduled times each student had to write a brief essay question which also contained a brief model of the type of

answer which they expected. Students were instructed that their questions should be comparative in nature and, as the class went on, earlier material and chapter content could be drawn upon. The questions should require some thought and not be trivial in the sense that one could construct an objective multiple choice format with highly convergent answers. The instructor contributed a question and answer for each assigned period as well. In addition to the regularly scheduled textbook chapters, several primary author reprints were distributed. Students were encouraged to integrate the content of these additional readings into both their questions and answers. Those who did integrate these materials into their questions and answers were given higher points than those who merely stayed within the confines of the text. Instructor evaluation of both the quality of the questions as will as the quality of the answers was a considerable proportion (40%) of the course grade. The questions should have been neatly typed on the two forms (templates) which were provided. See Figure 1 which is an example of a template showing a student's question and another student's answer. One anonymous copy contained only their question and had space available for someone else to answer. The person who answered the question in class identified themselves by signing the bottom of their sheet. The other copy had both the question and the expected answer on the bottom half along with identification information as to who contributed the question. Greater importance was assigned to the prepared answer than the one which they wrote in class.

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Put Figure 1 about here

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Students were evenly divided into two groups (an A and B team). Teams exchanged their questions and then tried to answer each others' questions. The primary purpose of dividing the students into two teams was to insure that no one would answer their own question in class. Thus, a prepared question and answer to that question was already committed to writing when students came to class. In class they were given approximately 30 minutes to write their answers. Each question had to be germane to the regularly scheduled topic in the syllabus/calendar of events. However, because such a wide breadth of information was available for selection, the specific content of a question was not predictable. Thus a certain amount of random indeterminance was the general rule for these activities. As Hare-Mustin & Mareck (1988) state: "Postmodernism accepts randomness, incoherence, indeterminanacy, and paradox, which postivist paradigms are designed to exclude. Postmodernism creates distance from the seemingly fixed language of established meanings and fosters skepticism about the fixed nature of reality (p. 462)". (Further discussion of this randomness is contained in Sherman, 1987). What one student felt was important enough to integrate into their question, another student might have completely ignored. Students really had to come to class prepared. This was an "open book" experience and all notes and related readings were available as resources in answering another's question. While the students wrote their answers the instructor made copies of everyones questions for later distribution to the class.

After completion of the inclass writing of an answer to another's question, each student had to confront the student who posed the question. Since the answer was already previously prepared outside of

class, a certain amount of commitment had already been made. Conceptual conflict or convergence was thus achieved in these dyadic meetings, two of which usually took place. This was usually a time of lively discussion. After the dyadic meetings had taken place, all student questions were then distributed to the entire class. This sharing of questions allowed all class members to see what others believed was an important question to ask of the materials. In a small class of 6 to 17 students, these activities involved approximately 60% of class time and were believed to be highly informative and productive experiences.

Results, Conclusions and Reflections

The significance of the dyad as the simplest and most important sociological formations described as a "group" has been extensively discussed by Simmel (1965) and others. Pedagogical applications of the empirical findings of the group dynamics of dyads is sparse. However, teaching through the use of dyadic peer pairings is presently gaining a renewed interest from instructors and social psychological researchers alike (van Oudenhoven et al., 1987), especially in the cooperative education movement. For a more thurough discussion of cooperative classroom writing in "collaborative" and "Peer Response" groups, Dipardo & Freedman's (1988) recent article as well as Gere (1987) provide a great wealth of information and clarification. Recently at the Fourth Convention of the International Association for the Study of Cooperation in Education Hertz-Lazarowitz et al., (1988) and Telles (1988) presented newly innovated dyadic techniques for teaching. While the present technique described above is not the same as their approaches, the focus on dyads in the teaching/learning process is an important point of convergence. As Hertz-Lazarowitz et

al (1988) has pointed out, dyadic teaching has had a long and distinguished history of successful use among talmudic scholars for nearly 2000 years. Hertz-Lazarowitz's et al (1988) technique is based on a heirarchial arrangement of tutor/tutee pairings in which the both members reverse roles at one time or another while imparting knowledge to each other. Telles (1988) technique is similar to Aronson's (1978) "jigsaw" technique with the addition of concentrated dyadic interactions among "expert group" members. Both of these examples are based on a rationale of "cognitive rehearsal" and assume convergence of thought and an external objectivity which is to be learned, whereas the present technique is based on postmodern thought including the concepts of cognitive elaboration, paradox, divergence and plural realities. The dyadic confrontation technique presented in this essay is a continuation of the author's earlier concerns for promoting learning through small group discussions (Sherman, 1976 & 1977).

The two sections receiving this type of strategy generally felt that it was highly beneficial to their learning of both the content of the class and about each other's perceptions of that content. While a six-item, objectively administered and rated university sanctioned "course/professor/evaluation" instrument was administered to all sections (See Table 1), the individual items were not as informative as the anecdotal comments which were volunteered. Nevertheless, most of the six items were more positively rated by students who had experienced the technique than the ratings obtained in sections which had not experienced it. Most of the written comments contributed by students reflected a highly positive acceptance of the writing experience. Above all, the experience was highly motivating, stimulating much more intense study of the text and related reading

materials. Confronting their peers in the class motivated them to study and think about the materials in more depth. It has been suggested that this technique also promotes "critical reading" as much as writing skills. Students believed that it helped them to not only understand the theories better, but also expanded their perception of the importance, application, and interpretation of these theories. This was especially so concerning the interpretation of the theories which appeared to be most strongly influenced by the differential perceptions of their peers (eg., where cognitive conflict was most apparent). One of the most common remarks overheard in class confrontation/dialogue was "I never 'thought' of that!" or "While I thought this was the 'right' answer, I can certainly see what you were focusing on."

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Thus, in general, it is believed that this strategy was favorably accepted by the students, and, they perceived that it was a valuable experience in learning about the theories. From the instructor's perspective, the students progressively became more sophisticated as the semester continued, with the best most integrated questions and answers appearing at the end of the class. Many students also expressed the view that they felt much more critically and analytically competent at the end of the class than they did at the beginning. Thus, it is felt that not only did the students experience a postmodern teaching technique, but may have also gained an appreciation and developed toward a more relativistic stage of conceptual thinking (Perry, 1970).

Future applications of this technique might also add an element of peer evaluation to this process. While the instructor was the only adjudicator of the quality of the questions and answers, peer-evaluation of both might draw more upon and develop the critical abilities of the students in the class (Fulwiler & Jones, 1982). However, one one needs to be cautious when introducing the element of individual competition by including peer-evaluation (Sherman, 1986).

Two additional comments appear relevant. Many contemporary developmental theorists are emphasizing the importance of "postmodern" thinking (eg., Brunfenbrenner et al., 1986). The above strategy is believed to reflect this sentiment. The second point concerns the contemporary movement to encourage more writing experience across the curriculum, having its major support among teachers of English. Three colleagues in the English Department who have been highly active in promoting writing activities across the curriculum have read this manuscript. One important comment which all three volunteered was the importance of desemination of reports such as this to disciplines other than audiences whose concern is already "writing": eg., the National Council of Teachers of English. In other words, don't "preach to the choir." While the strategies described in this report obviously take up more instructor time in reading and evaluating essays, it is believed that the gains in student writing abilities and thinking (rhetoric), and the motivating stimulation of the class discussions are worth the efforts. Lastly, while the rich variety of developmental theories is eminently suited to this technique, it is believed that any educational psychology course could benefit from this approach.

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Table 1

Summary of Graduate Human Development Course Evaluations.

Course (year) Enrollment	Evaluation Items: "How would you rate the:[a] 1 Overall Rating	2 Testing & Eval.	3 Organ-ization	4 Interest	5 Manner	6 Attitude	Means
-Sections using Dyadic Essay Confrontations-							
EDP 635 (SP 1988)	3.50	3.33	3.50	3.67	3.17	3.66	3.47
N=6 SD's	.55	.52	.55	.52	.75	.52	
EDP 635 (SP 1987)	3.12	3.24	2.65	3.71	2.88	3.41	3.17
N=17 SD's	.60	.90	.99	.47	1.05	.71	
-Sections NOT using Dyadic Essay Confrontations-							
EDP 635 (SP 1986)	2.67	3.25	2.50	3.25	2.42	3.42	2.91
N=12 SD's	1.07	.86	1.00	.75	1.08	.90	
EDP 633 (FL 1982)	3.00	3.00	2.86	3.14	2.57	3.00	2.92
N=7 SD's	.82	.82	.90	.69	.53	.82	

[a] Each of the 6 items were rated on a 0 (poor) to 4 (excellent) Likert-like scale.

Figure 1.

An Example of the Question/Answer Template, With An Example of One Student's Answer to Another's Question.

FORM (I OR II): ...II...

QUESTION NUMBER (1 THRU 8):.....5..... GROUP (A or B): .....

Q SCORE:.....

YOUR QUESTION:

Assume that teachers in elementary schools (grades 1 through 4) can influence the development of their students. Looking at the theories of Freud and Erikson, what role should these teachers play in facilitating positive development and encouraging healthy personality growth in their children.

---------- YOUR ANSWER (LEAVE BLANK ON FORM II): ----------

A SCORE:....

In order to positively influence the outcomes of the "industry vs inferiority" crisis teachers can provide opportunities for play, provide appropriate tasks and furnish guidence in accomplishing goals as determined by the child and the teacher. It is also necessary for the teacher to view as worthy, ideas and skills the child may already have and express them as such. This is an important time in the childs' developing sense of ego and "personal power" (Heider) as well. Adults need to have an attitude of approval and encouragement. Teachers need to examine their own attitudes toward success and failure. With pressure from administrators and parents to provide proof of children's accomplishments, teachers may be forced to insist upon certain tasks being completed in a certain manner. For children who do not necessarily fit into the group socially or academically, stress and/or failure may result, and industry be defeated. A teacher should individualize as much as possible and soundly defend the child's right to individual consideration. Since the peer group, usually homogeneous with regard to gender, is becoming increasingly more important, developing small group activities where children can plan, organize and produce would instill pride (ego development) and a sense of belonging, especially within same-gender groups. Whatever methods are used, someone once said "children don't fail, teachers do". It is every teacher's responsibility to find a method that will insure success with a particular child, use it and defend it. The classroom environment should be "child centered" providing opportunities for child initiated and child directed activities. Opportunities for the successful accomplishment of meaningful academic skills should be provided as well as real life activities to improve competencies in self-care and everyday life.

YOUR NAME: .....Student's Name..... A(Q/A) SCORE: .....